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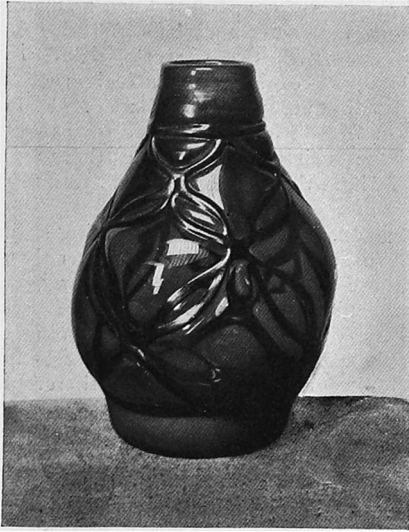
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THE ART OF THINGS

After all, Art is a very tangible thing, as we have it, evolved from some centuries of indefiniteness. Let it be taken that Art is the con-



VASE IN GLASS, BLOWN THROUGH METAL
BINDING, BY LOUIS C. TIFFANY

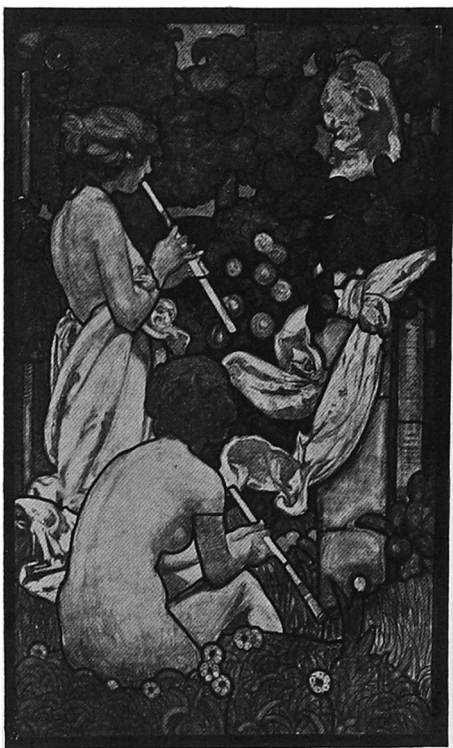
ception and the application of the beautiful (as progression measures things) to *anything* in accord; it is not so complex as we may have imagined it to be. Art was fairly tangible when we could *see* it. It is more than ever so now that we can feel it. Some centuries of painting have taught us about pictures and their art; some centuries of sculpture have conveyed to us the inspiration embodied in chiseled stone. Finally some centuries of craftship have bequeathed to us a grand legacy, whose value we are just beginning to appreciate, through the movement of the arts and crafts. The art of the painter and the art of the sculptor has been a conscious art necessarily,

but it is these commonplaces of life whose very utility, though stolid, has nevertheless absorbed much of the beauty of bygone times, which awaken us now to the realization that through them "ornamental as well as useful" is a justifiable turning of the axiom.

It is an old saying that everything in nature is beautiful and that nature cannot err. A few savants in wrought-iron spectacles and bone collar-buttons have risen to dispute this from time to time. They had nothing else to do. Necessity is always natural; the very word itself—"a need of nature" shows that it is so. Therefore everything we need (that is everything useful) should be beautiful. When it is not, man's hand has interfered, or is guilty of the other sin, that of omission in not carrying out nature's tendencies toward the beautiful.



A WINDOW IN "FAVRILE" GLASS
BY LOUIS C. TIFFANY



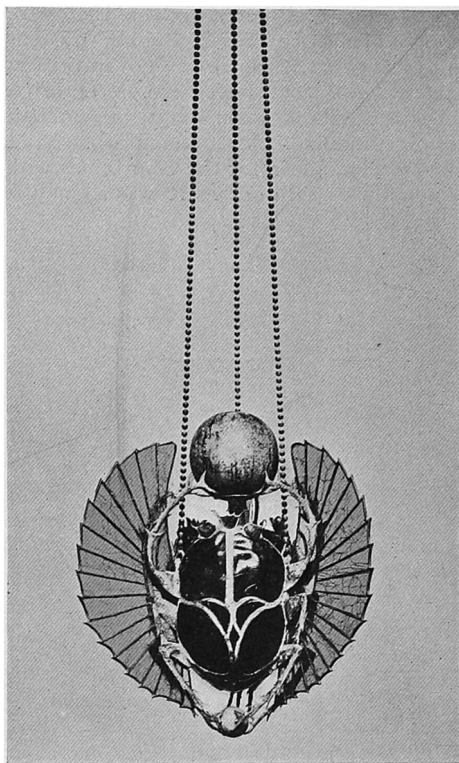
STAINED GLASS WINDOW
BY LOUIS C. TIFFANY

It is not the beauty of these things as pleasing us alone of which we are thinking. There is that within us which calls us to add to that heritage which is to be transmitted to those who are to come after. This is an unselfish feeling and probably this era is the most unselfish one in the history of existence. Whether

this is so or not—and it doesn't matter; no one knows—it is comprehensible that unselfishness plays a large part in art development. Times and conditions make people selfish or unselfish to some extent and those same times and conditions shape art. Every *object d'art* extant is a sign of the times; every article of furniture is likewise. The art of Miles Standish's old settle is a rebuke to the writing-table of Louis XIV., yet the art

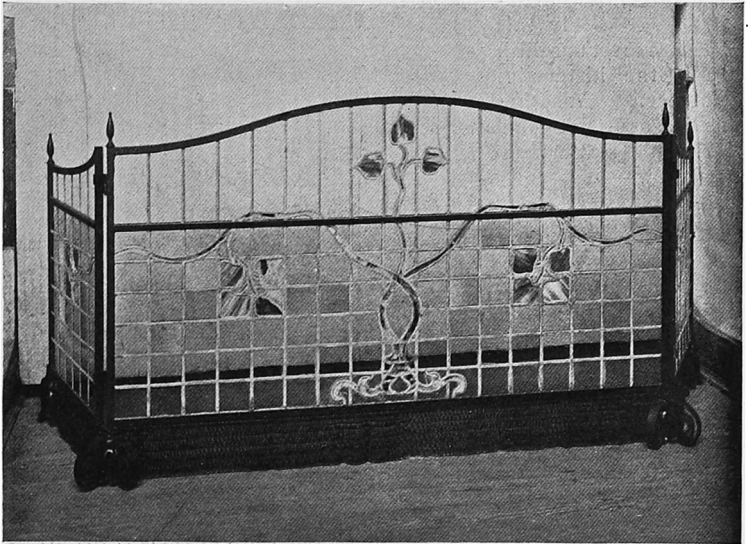
of the epoch of the Grande Monarque must be considered such as well as the art of the Puritan. Misapplication often makes things appear unequal, and it is the misapplication of the *art-idea* to the *thing* which artists are awakening and training themselves to avoid. Even the Frenchmen have come to realize that it is time for them to separate the grace from the frivol of the spider-legged tendencies of Louis Quatorze—that other styles of decoration are quite as adapted to lend sublimity to a *Grand Salon*. It is this new interest in the *art of things* which has shaped the movement of the arts and crafts.

Perhaps it will be well to illustrate a point in the influence which conditions have had upon art, and particularly upon applied art in this instance. Consider the evolution of a chair. Primitive man, tired of



HANGING ELECTRIC LAMP, BY LOUIS C. TIFFANY
VERDIGRIS-BRONZE AND GLASS. BODY OF BUG RICH GREEN
FAVRILE GLASS, THROUGH WHICH LIGHT IS SOFTLY DIFFUSED

standing, naturally squatted on the earth. One fine day (it is presumed) he discovered the bliss of dangling his legs from some boulder perch. Finally he got in the habit of resting where at the same time he could be on the alert. Then came a period in the history of mankind when many human beings came to live together, forming innumerable communities. Village life then was just as elaborate an affair for the Aborigines with their resources as city life is now for us with ours. It was soon discovered inconvenient to sit



A FENDER FIRE SCREEN, BY LOUIS C. TIFFANY
HEAVY LEADED "FAVRILE" GLASS AND METAL

all over and around; as the little boy said when he saw his father arise from lounging upon the grass, "The older you grow the farther up you have to get." And that may have had something to do with it. As it was not at all practicable to build a house over an available boulder, the "boulder" idea, had, naturally, to be applied to subserve the house. Then it was that the first rude benches were constructed, and these primitive forms gradually assumed a distinctive appearance, and their utility and permanency was established. When this was so, as the tastes of centuries changed, these things were modified to be pleasing to the eye, and this modification again, was "art."

Parallel with this example we can trace the evolution of everything that we have around us. This one has been cited partly in repudiation of the insistence of certain craftsmen, that our only salvation in the arts and crafts is in returning to eighty-ton candlesticks, rush-strewn floors, and a free-for-all mess-pot, to exaggerate a bit. Art is progressive not retrogressive. For instance, the "antique fever" is justifiable from two standpoints—from historical association of the things sought, or from the fact that the articles are really good. A bad thing is always bad, and perhaps worse when it is coupled with old age, but an *object d'art* is always monumental of the æsthetic.

Old Omar Khayyám evidently understood things when he said,

"A hair perhaps divides the
False and True";

and upon that realization the whole matter of the art of things rests. Constantly surrounded as we are by things which we have to use and see, which therefore must be made pleasant to look upon, we are surely approaching a time when this hair-breadth distance will be definite to every mind, and involuntary discrimination may come to be numbered with the

senses. It may be a chair or a carpet, a screen or a lamp, a vase or a fire-shovel, it matters not what, art is charitable and lends her garments to invest the nakedness of starved practicality. We know what such men as William Morris have done for the useful arts, how they led them to a lasting companionship with the fine arts. William Morris himself was a tremendously versatile man, but he was well-balanced and an indefatigable worker. He decried the tendency of modern commercialism to cheapen the *quality* of things and aimed in his work to restore something of the bygone



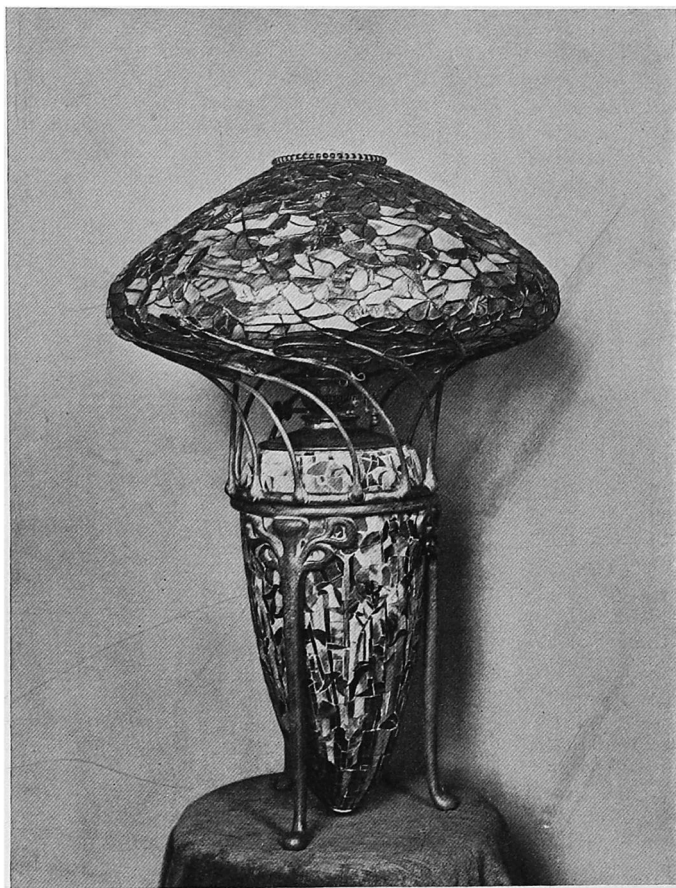
CARVED CHAIR, BY LOUIS C. TIFFANY

solidity to all things. He resurrected ancient methods of workmanship but *only* when his inventive faculties failed to substitute a *better* manner of doing things. He printed his books on paper made as the first paper was made, and if you ask why, you are answered by the knowledge that the kind of paper which has endured half a thousand years is likely to endure half a thousand more, and the usual flimsy products of our market were obviously not worthy of the art of William Morris, or of any of the men whose masterly words he put in type. Morris did not imitate the arts of the ancient master-printers

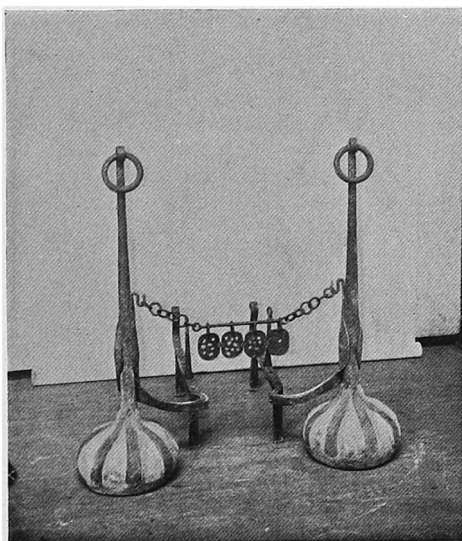


FAVRILE GLASS, BY LOUIS C. TIFFANY

because they were *antique*; he did not weave his tapestries nor design his furniture after things in the element of tradition because of any veneration of antiquity *as antiquity*, but he did all these things because these ancient practices had not been superseded by any enduring modern devices, yet he was constantly at work on the problem of bringing the modern manufacturer and the artist of to-day into communion, of proving that art could be applied advantageously to the demands of factory machines. Many of his hopes were realized before his lamented death, and the art impetus he gave the workers of this century is not to be measured by words. Many earnest workers are following his plans as the work of the arts-and-craftsmen in England shows, and nearly all of the efforts of the French workers



OIL LAMP, BY LOUIS C. TIFFANY
THE BOWL AND SHADE OF TINY BITS OF "FAVRILE" GLASS PUT TOGETHER
IN LEADING IN BUTTERFLY AND FLORAL DESIGN



ANDIRONS, BY LOUIS C. TIFFANY

came from Anglican inspiration. Here and there (notably in Germany and Belgium), there have been many independent undertakings, and the art of things is actually becoming *popular*. In America, Mr. Louis C. Tiffany has probably done the most of any one practically toward forwarding a feeling for the beautiful as applied to our necessities. Besides being endowed with inherited taste, Mr. Tiffany's talent found fostering in the ateliers of George Inness, Samuel Colman, Leon Bailey, and other great pictorial artists, and from those days of study until now his positive genius has developed. In the Tiffany studios, New York, may be seen such a variety of examples of things artistic that reproductions from photographs of these things have been deemed sufficient to illustrate this bit of commentary and its title. Mr. Tiffany's work is a lesson to every craftsman. While there is no absolute defiance of tradition, yet everything is so invested with beautiful and sensible originality that it cannot fail to appeal to the æsthetic and to the practical senses at one and the same time. Tiffany is likewise the recognized authority in America on glass, and his own experiments and developments along this line have brought him the commendation of all lovers of the beautiful. He has not been content with the mere discovery of things, but like Morris he has spent quite as much energy in *applying* his art and doing that

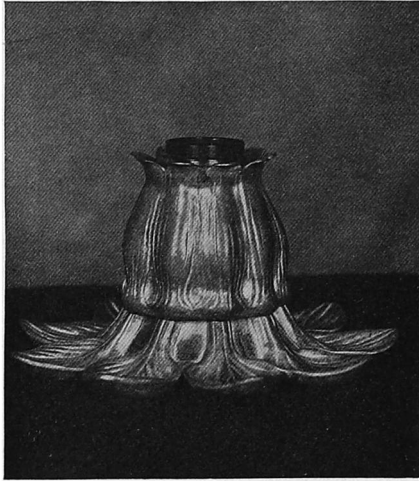
unselfishly, devoting whole days at a time, as he often does, to working out some idea, which, when grasped, appears simple enough, but which most people would not have the patience to make clear to themselves, and which idea he always gladly gives to the world from a love for the promotion of the beautiful.

After all it is a joy to enter a place so well attuned as is Mr. Tiffany's studio. There is demonstrated the possibility of making everything throb in sympathetic loveliness, and the fairy forms of the wonderful Favrite "bric-glass-a-brac" again remind one of the great tent-maker's words:

"Shapes of all sorts and sizes, great and small,
That stood along the floor and by the wall;
And some loquacious vessels were; and some
Listened perhaps, but never talked at all."

Still the art of things always speaks for itself, and it rests now with us who are interested in the arts and crafts whether or not to make this inanimate conversation interesting.

GARDNER C. TEALL.



"FAVRILE" GLASS, BY LOUIS C. TIFFANY